



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

March 30, 1984

LEGISLATIVE REFERRAL MEMORANDUM

July
SPECIAL

OLL #
84-1268

TO: Legislative Liaison Officer

Department of Defense
Department of Justice
Department of State
National Security Council
Central Intelligence Agency

SUBJECT: OPM proposed report on H.R. 4681, "Federal Polygraph Limitation and Anti-Censorship Act of 1984."

The Office of Management and Budget requests the views of your agency on the above subject before advising on its relationship to the program of the President, in accordance with OMB Circular A-19.

A response to this request for your views is needed no later than April 5, 1984. Committee may mark up at any time.

Questions should be referred to Hilda Schreiber

(395-4650) or to -----
the legislative analyst in this office.

Naomi R. Sweeney
Naomi R. Sweeney for
Assistant Director for
Legislative Reference

Enclosures



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110.12 ET
United States
**Office of
Personnel Management**
Washington, D.C. 20415

In Reply Refer To

Your Reference

Honorable William D. Ford
Chairman, Committee on Post Office
and Civil Service
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This is in response to your request for comments from the Office of Personnel Management on H.R. 4681, the "Federal Polygraph Limitation and Anti-Censorship Act of 1984."

OPM has government-wide responsibility over the civilian personnel security and suitability program. Although OPM does not itself administer polygraph examinations, or require prepublication review, nevertheless, it is charged with investigating individuals for access to classified information, and with granting approval for use of the polygraph for certain purposes.

The use of polygraph exams in the federal government, and its implications on the privacy and rights of employees is not a novel issue. In 1965 President Johnson directed a comprehensive review of the use of the polygraph in the executive branch, and issued a memorandum which has since been incorporated into the Federal Personnel Manual. The memorandum acknowledged the intrusiveness of the polygraph, and imposed certain restrictions on its use, while, at the same time, authorizing its usage in criminal and (counter) intelligence-related operations.

Unlike H.R. 4681, President Johnson's memorandum recognized that agencies other than the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency had "intelligence or counter-intelligence missions directly affecting the national security." Further, unlike H.R. 4681, President Johnson's memorandum recognized that certain agencies or agency components with missions similar to that of the CIA or NSA, require use of polygraph examinations for supplementary employment screening. Adequate procedural safeguards were included, and the Civil Service Commission was granted overall authority to prevent abuse.

Honorable William D. Ford

2

OPM, and the Civil Service Commission before it, have used that authority prudently. Although, in certain respects, President Johnson's memorandum allowed agencies a greater measure of discretion than provided either in President Reagan's National Security Decision Directive No. 84 or H.R. 4681, there has not been a single complaint (filed with or brought to the attention of OPM or the Civil Service Commission) of the type of abuse and misidentification noted in the (somewhat sensational) "Findings" of the Act. In the course of the last 19 years, OPM has granted approval to only 3 agencies for polygraph examinations. This approval was granted only after proper evidence that the requisite level of examining expertise existed in the agency, assurances of adequate protections against abuse or error, and guarantees of comprehensive due process protections for applicants and employees. The enactment of the Proposed Act would protect against "abuses" that do not exist, and would refute the overwhelming evidence demonstrated by scientific studies, government surveys, and "real life" experience of the extraordinary effectiveness of polygraph testing as a screening and investigative tool, when these are restricted to situations where they are warranted.

In short, OPM is opposed to H. R. 4681. It appears to have been drafted without regard to any of the vitally important national security considerations where polygraphs have been found essential by at least 6 presidents. And secondly, its rationale, consisting of the "Findings" in section 2, is entirely inconsistent with the combined, decades-long experience of federal agencies. Unless the Congress can establish that such abuses have, in fact, occurred in the course of many polygraph examinations administered by federal agencies over this period of time, it would be imprudent to seriously restrict OPM's authority over the single most effective tool agencies have to prevent compromise of classified information.

OPM is prepared to participate in a constructive dialogue towards attainment of a responsible balance between the rights, privacy, and protections of federal employees, and the safety and security of the nation's most sensitive secrets. H.R. 4681 fails badly in that respect.

Sincerely,

Donald J. Devine
Director